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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a list of criteria for the stating of competencies for teachers of reading and the related language arts. Based on a recognition of the basic interrelationships among the language arts, each of the eight proposed criteria further defines adequate competency statements. Briefly stated, the author proposes that these statements should avoid jargon, provide specific and detailed guidance, specify desired teaching-learning acts, include a variety of options, state entry, advanced, and specialization levels, and be grouped in modules. A tentative list of modules for the teaching of reading and an example of a complete module on reading evaluation and diagnosis are given. (TO)

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COMPETENCIES FOR TEACHERS OF READING AND THE RELATED LANGUAGE ARTS

Harry W. Sartain

Specific teacher competencies are the instructional objectives of any teacher-education program. But we teacher educators, like all other educators, seem to have the same enthusiasm for stating and studying instructional objectives as we have for going to the dentist. Slighting objectives, however, like slighting dental visits, can be a foolish practice that results in greatly reduced effectiveness. When objectives are vague, instructional time is used inefficiently, learning effort is dissipated, and students grow into inadequate teachers.

The writing of teacher competencies and other educational objectives is especially difficult at this time because authorities currently hold such strongly divergent opinions on the matter. Therefore, it is necessary to seek agreement upon a list of criteria which will be followed in itemizing competencies. Only after reaching agreement on the criteria can there be any hope of reaching agreement on the competencies.

A proposed list of criteria for the stating of competencies for teachers of reading and the related language arts follows.

1. Competency statements should reflect a recognition of the basic interrelationships among the language arts.

Oral language skills are the foundation of reading skills, and an understanding of the structure and mechanics of written language

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is also required for fluent reading. Therefore, no teacher can be a fully effective reading instructor without having the competencies needed for teaching or for cooperating with others in teaching the child the related language understandings, attitudes, and skills.

2. Competency statements should be worded in a simple, straight-forward manner so that they can be easily understood and utilized by the learner and the instructor.

Competencies and other objectives which appear to have been written to impress the reader with the writer's erudition or his skill in using a thesaurus usually have had no appreciable effect upon educational practice.

3. Competency statements should be specific and detailed enough to provide clear guidance for students and instructors, but also brief enough so that they can be assimilated and used.

In the past some statements have been so broad as to be mere general platitudes. Others have been so detailed, repetitive, and voluminous that they have overwhelmed the student and the instructor with verbiage, thereby providing no help in planning teacher education experiences which can be completed within reasonable time limits.

4. Competency statements should specify or clearly imply desired teaching-learning acts, or behaviors.

There has been a great deal of disagreement concerning the adequacy of goals stated as behavioral outcomes (4). The humanist suspects the behavioral psychologist of attempting to mold children's minds in a predetermined "brave new world" style that would minimize individuality. Isabel Beck responds to this criticism by showing that some humanist teachers set goals that are too vague to be helpful, and she adds that "we cannot afford to ignore what the behaviorists have learned if we are to teach effectively the goals that humanists hold" (1).

Educators have been critical, also, when behaviorists have declared that no educational objective should be stated if the instructional outcome cannot be measured. Since this too often is interpreted as "if the instructional outcome cannot be easily measured by traditional instruments," it would mean the elimination of all objectives leading to the development of attitudes, appreciations, and values. Obviously, these are among the most important objectives of instruction in literature, as well as in civilized human relations, and their elimination is unthinkable to any but the simple-minded. Instead, we must specify the objectives that we deem important, and then seek new ways of observing and measuring behaviors that indicate progress toward their achievement.

5. In relation to each general competency there may be specific statements that imply several kinds of behaviors:

   A. Valuing — displaying positive attitudes toward the children, the profession, and the communication arts

   B. Understanding — knowing the concepts and principles to be taught

   C. Applying — using knowledge of how to teach in working with learners

   D. Analyzing-Changing — evaluating professional processes and devising new and better teaching techniques

While taxonomies by Bloom (2) and by Krothwahl (3) are extremely helpful in stimulating thinking about educational objectives, if one follows them slavishly, the result is wordy and repetitious. In actual practice the observation of one behavior can imply the fulfillment of more than one closely related goal, making it unnecessary to itemize every degree of development.

6. The behaviors which are specified as examples of expected outcomes should include a variety of options in order to foster the development of human individuality.

An error frequently made in connection with the preparation of behavioral objectives has been that of stating only one behavior as the criterion for the attainment of each understanding, skill, or attitude. For example, when intending to teach children to understand and enjoy a literary characterization by identifying with the character in a story, the teacher might state the objective as: "Describes the enthusiasm he would feel if he were in the position of Teddy Roosevelt in Frances Cavanch's story "A Naturalist in the City". But any child who is repelled by the thought of white mice or a fresh seal's skin, might react quite differently from what the teacher intended even though he were very able to identify fully with characters in other stories.

Likewise, in the preparation of teachers of reading one might state a competency such as this: "Adapts reading instruction suitably for children having subtle learning disabilities by providing Frostig exercies." Then, if the standard were applied consistently, the behavior of a student teacher would be assessed negatively if she were following a fine cooperating teacher's example by using the Fernald techniques and other procedures that have been proven productive.

In both of these instances, the learner would not be given credit for achieving the outcome, because the criterion behavior was too limited to allow other valid performances. This clearly illustrates the importance of permitting optional behaviors as evidence of learning.

7. Competencies should be stated at the entry level, the advanced level, and the specialization level, when appropriate, to indicate growth in capability.

It is impossible for a beginning teacher to have mastered all of the skills of reading instruction. Therefore, competency statements should indicate which capabilities are essential at the beginning of teaching and which are to be developed through additional study and in-service work.

8. Competency statements may be grouped in such a way that they are an aid to teacher educators in planning blocks or modules of experiences which can be built into teacher education programs and in-service programs.

The preparation of an excellent teacher of reading is a long process. Consequently, the program of preparation must be divided into meaningful segments. These segments may be developed around different groups of competencies and around the stages of advancement toward specialization.

Competency Statements in Modules of Teacher Education

In written form a module might consist of only a list of the competencies pertaining to a particular phase of teaching. Or it might also include appropriate learning experiences and the criterion behaviors that indicate satisfactory attainment of the competencies.

Some modules, such as the following, should be fundamental to the preparation of all teachers:

a. Understanding Self
b. Understanding the Child
c. Understanding how the Child Learns
d. Understanding and Working in the Community
e. (Others)

Other modules should focus upon the learnings that pertain directly to the teaching of reading. A tentative list of these modules follows, and an example of the module on Evaluation and Diagnosis of Learning is attached.

a. Understanding the Communications Processes and the Structure of the English Language
b. Interaction with Parents and the Community
c. Instructional Planning: Curriculum, Instructional Steps, Materials, Approaches
d. Evaluation and Diagnosis of Learning
e. School and Classroom Organization for Individualizing Instruction
f. Individualizing Instruction in Difficult Circumstances (Economically underprivileged, bilingual, nonstandard dialects.)
g. Developing Language Fluency and Perceptual Skills in Childhood
h. Reception and Expression of Social Communications
i. Teaching Vocabulary and Word-Attack Skills
j. Teaching the Decoding and Retention of Factual Information (Comprehension)
k. Teaching Functional Reading and Study Skills in Specific Fields of Content
l. Teaching literary Appreciation for Young Children
m. Teaching literary Appreciation for Intermediate Children
n. Teaching literary Appreciation for Secondary and College Students
o. Corrective Treatment of Reading Difficulties in the Classroom
p. Clinical Treatment of Reading Difficulties
q. Initiating Improvements in School Programs

The listing of competencies of varied types and levels of advancement, and the development of modules for teacher education is an extremely demanding undertaking. However, the usefulness of these modules when fitted into preservice and inservice programs should be tremendous. Because they will precisely itemize productive instructional behaviors, the modules should help us all in the task to which we are dedicated — the preparation of excellent teachers of reading.

MODULE: EVALUATION AND DIAGNOSIS

(H. M. Sartain)

Competencies	Criterion Behaviors	Learning Experiences
1. Determines the appropriate level of developmental reading instruction for individual pupils.		
Entry Level		
Administers a simple individual standardized test which indicates instructional level.	Three correct administrations of Space Diagnostic Scales or equivalent.	Study Manual. Practice with classmate and children.
Recognized that the independent reading level is lower than the instructional, that the frustration level is higher, and assigns reading tasks accordingly.	Explains the concepts. Determines three levels correctly for three pupils.	Try several pupils in reading material at and below achievement test score levels to observe degrees of fluency. Study professional references.
Reassesses pupil's instructional placement periodically.	Notes individual difficulties. Readministers tests to a few. Recommends changes in skills or general level of instruction for two pupils.	Discussion.
Advanced Level		
Classifies children approximately by using a group reading inventory in each field of study.	Administers a group inventory to one class and reports results.	Read professional references. Construct a group inventory.
Administers an informal reading inventory.	Administers IRI to two pupils. Demonstrates IRI to group of classmates.	Study references. Practice with colleague and children.

Competencies	Criterion Behaviors	Learning Experiences
Specialization Level		
Demonstrates individual test and inventory techniques for other teachers.	Shows evaluation form responses from teachers. Demonstrates before professor.	Practice with colleagues. Review references and manual.
Explains research findings showing most achievement test scores are above the child's instructional level.	Summarizes research. Demonstrate with test scores from any class.	Study research.
Investigates effectiveness of the school's reading placement procedures and offers possible improvements.	Does brief written evaluation of procedures with recommendations. Makes oral summary.	Study research and recent authoritative recommendations.

Competencies	Criterion Behaviors	Learning Experiences
2. Estimates each child's potential reading achievement level.		
Entry Level		
Administers group intelligence tests which correlate closely with individual tests. Refers individuals for individual testing.	Administers Lorge-Thorndike, Pintner Cunningham, or similar tests requiring minimal reading to one class. Estimates which pupils were inadequately tested.	Reference Study Practice.
Computes a reading expectancy level from CA and IQ.	Uses one of several techniques to estimate expectancies for ten pupils.	Reference study and lectures. Laboratory practice.
Advanced Level		
Explains how invalid expectancy estimates are obtained from most group tests.	Gives oral or written explanation.	Reference study and lectures. Laboratory Practice.
Adjusts expectancy level in view of pupil background and emotional growth.	Does brief case studies on ten pupils and adjusts scores accordingly.	Reference study. Observe case study conference in a school.
Specialization Level		
Administers Stanford-Binet and Wechsler individual intelligence tests.	Administers 12 of each test.	Reference study. Observe demonstration testing. Practice with colleagues.
Studies research on expectancy formulas and seeks improved procedures.	Reports findings orally.	Study of recent research.

Competencies	Criterion Behaviors	Learning Experiences
3. Determines whether individuals learn most effectively through an auditory, visual, kinesthetic or combination perceptual technique, and adjusts instruction accordingly.		
Entry Level		
Administers an informal perceptual learning modality measure (Baxter) to children not progressing well.	Successfully administers instrument or equivalent to six children.	Study directions. Lecture. Laboratory Practice.
Provides numerous tracing and writing experiences for kinesthetic learners.	Plans materials for six lessons for one pupil. Puts examples in resource file.	Reference study. Make resource notebook of lessons.
Provides auditory learners with unusual amount of audio experience using tape recorder and other aides.	Prepares six taped lessons.	Reference study. Class demonstration.
Advanced Level		
Cites findings from several research studies on comparative effectiveness of visual training program.	Cites 6-8 studies orally or in writing.	Study journals.
Provides pupil team practice activities.	Shows charts or games used in team practice.	Class demonstration. View filmstrips.
Provides special visual training programs for selected individuals.	Plans materials for six lessons. Puts examples in resource file.	Reference study. Prepare resource notes.
Specialization Level		
Administers a formal perceptual learning modality measure (Hills or equivalent) and interprets it with understanding of test shortcomings.	Successfully administers instrument to two pupils; interprets results in writing or orally.	Study directions. Read journal comments on its use. Practice with colleague.
Cites research on several perceptual training programs, and experiments with some.	Sets up one experiment at either an informal or formal level.	Read research. Group discussion.

Competencies	Criterion Behaviors	Learning Experiences
4. Identifies children having symptoms of subtle learning disabilities, obtains assistance in their diagnosis, and adapts instructional programs suitably for individuals.		
Entry Level		
Enumerates 12 or more common symptoms of subtle learning disabilities.	Enumerates orally. Written test performance.	Lecture and discussion. Reference and film study.
Uses a checklist of subtle learning disability symptoms to screen the class.	Devises new checklist. Uses Falk School checklist or one from references.	Study checklists and references. Guided observations in classrooms.
Refers selected individuals to specialists for further diagnosis.	Discusses cases with school psychologist.	Conference with school faculty on procedures.
Makes program adaptations to overcome problems of easy distraction, tension, perceptual difficulty, motor coordination difficulty, memory weakness, organization difficulty, etc.	Prepares six lessons for each of two types of adjustments, using tracing, self-recitation, sight-sound and other appropriate techniques.	Group discussion. Observation and conferences with demonstration teachers.
Advanced Level		
Defines a number of terms such as aphasia, dyslexia, strephosymbolia, minimal brain damage, perceptual dysfunction, psycho-motor difficulty and disabling emotional block, and explains basis for each hypothesis of disability.	Performs on test. Makes oral presentation.	Reference study. Use filmstrips and sound tapes.
Notes that subtle learning disabilities have similar symptoms, and cannot be surely differentiated.	Compares two children having similar symptoms but seeming to have different causal backgrounds.	Group discussion. Classroom observation.

Competencies	Criterion Behaviors	Learning Experiences
Administers the Group Diagnostic Reading Aptitude and Achievement Tests (Monroe & Sherman) or equivalent, to differentiate subtle learning disability from skills weakness.	Administers instrument to four pupils and reports results.	Study Manual. Practice with colleagues.
Tries more than one recommended adaptation with an individual if the first does not prove successful: Fernald, phonics, color phonics, progressive choice, or Gillingham.	Uses at least four of these approaches in classroom or laboratory.	Reference study. Observe demonstration teacher.
Specialization Level		
Examines psychologists' findings on subtle learning disabilities and research on laterality; explains to other teachers.	Simulates conference with classmates. Outlines and presents to school faculty.	Study journals. Lectures.
Administers Slingerland Test or equivalent to obtain further information on child's subtle learning disability.	Administers instrument to three pupils.	Study directions. Group discussion.
Notes evidence of learning disability in Wechsler and Binet test sections.	Analyzes Wechsler or Binet reports on five disability cases.	Study references. Lecture.
Experiments formally with several programs to overcome subtle learning disabilities in reading and recommends some to other teachers.	Plans comparative experiment. Leads teacher group in carrying out experiment.	Group discussion. Study references.

Competencies	Criterion Behaviors	Learning Experiences
5. Identifies symptoms of physical disabilities that affect the child's success in reading.		
Entry Level		
Notes poor appetite, frequent hunger, allergies, paleness.	Prepares and uses checklist ten days in classroom.	Group discussion. Lecture by physician.
Notes signs of impaired hearing: mouth watching, inattention, poor auditory discrimination, others.	Prepares and used checklist ten days in classroom.	Group discussion. Lecture.
Notes signs of impaired vision: book held too close, eyes watering, eye rubbing, headaches, others.	Prepares and uses checklist.	Study references. Observe examples noted by demonstration teacher.
Advanced Level		
Administers watch-tick test.	Administer to 10 pupils.	Observe demonstration.
Specialization Level		
Explains research on vision and hearing as related to reading in conferences with other teachers.	Lists studies with findings.	Study research reports.
Screens for vision problems with telebinocular.	Screens one class	Study directions. Laboratory practice.

Competencies	Criterion Behaviors	Learning Experiences
6. Assesses reading achievement, identfying general areas of strength and weakness in pupils' reading capabilities.		
Entry Level		
Reveals familiarity with one standard survey test that measures vocabulary and comprehension at the level taught.	Responds correctly on tests concerning Gates Survey or other appropriate test.	Study test form and manual.
Reveals familiarity with one standard test of rate of reading.	Responds concerning rate testing Gates Survey or other test.	Study and take the test.
Administers survey tests of vocabulary, comprehension, and rate and makes comparisons to determine relative strengths and areas of need for learning.	Administers appropriate tests to five or more pupils and reports on comperative reading strengths or difficulties.	Study test manual. Lecture. Read references.
Knows and administers one test of work-study skills; assesses strengths and instructions need.	Administers work-study test from Iowa, Stanford or other battery to five or more pupils.	Study test manual.
Keeps a record of numbers and types of books and stories read independently by pupils.	Uses school form to record 20 or more readings. Copies form in Resource Notebook.	Conference with demonstration teacher.
Assesses interest in reading through discussion with individuals.	Talks with the pupils about special interest and finds materials.	Study journal articles on children's interests.
Reassesses vocabulary, comprehension, and study skills progress by observing performance in books and workbooks.	Reassesses progress of three children.	Observe demonstration teacher.
Compares reading achievement level with reading expectancy level for each pupil and determines which ones are within the acceptable range of deviation.	Makes comparison for five children.	Lecture. Conference with demonstration teacher.

Competencies	Criterion Behaviors	Learning Experiences
Advanced Level		
Shows familiarity with three standard reading survey tests.	Responds correctly on exam concerning tests. Explains orally.	Study test forms and manuals. Simulate administration.
Assesses rate through timed reading of selections in reading textbooks.	Assesses rate for three pupils.	Measure own rate in reading selection.
Utilizes more than one survey test when first test finding appears questionable.	Administers second test to 3 pupils.	Study test manuals, Group discussion.
Utilizes more than one test of work-study skills,	Administers second test to 3 pupils.	Study test manuals. Group discussion.
Knows and administers a standard test of literary appreciation.	Administers literary appreciation test in Develop. Rdg. Test or equivalent	Study test manual.
Knows and administers a reading attitude measure.	Administers instrument to 5 pupils.	Lecture. Group discussion.
Reassesses general progress by using another form of the same survey test or a different test.	Reassesses progress of 3 pupils.	Review manuals.
Specialization Level		
Proves familiarity with five or more reading survey tests at several levels of advancement.	Aids teachers at two or more levels in locating appropriate tests.	Examine tests. Group discussion.
Judges tests for validity, reliability, ease of administration, and adequacy in measuring all segments of the reading curriculum.	Refers to mental measurements Yearbook and prepares chart of tests with their features.	Study of references. Trial use of tests with comparison of data.
Demonstrates measurement techniques for less experienced teachers.	Demonstrates for 3 teachers and reports steps.	Group discussion. Simulated demonstration.
Examines and tries out new instruments to determine which do the measurement job most adequately.	Collects data and reports on comparative test trials.	Study journal articles.

Competencies	Criterion Behaviors	Learning Experiences
7. Diagnoses specific deficiencies in word analysis and recognition skills.		
Entry Level		
Assesses basic sight recognition vocabulary by using a list of commonly used words as an oral sight-word test.	Tests three children on Dolch service words. Uses other word list for testing.	Locate lists in journals or references. Study how lists were developed.
Proves familiarity with simple standardized oral individual test of word analysis skills.	Responds on exam or explains test orally.	Study test and manual.
Skillfully administers one simple standardized oral individual test of word analysis skills.	Administers test to 3 pupils, and reports findings.	Observe demonstration.
Notes types and frequencies of word attack errors in individual written exercises.	Keeps list of errors in writing of 5 pupils for several days.	Study of pupils' writing. Group discussion.
Notes types and frequencies of word attack errors in individual oral reading.	Keeps list of errors of 5 pupils in oral reading and classifies them by type.	Study references. Observe demonstration.
Advanced Level		
Proves familiarity with two individual and two group tests of word attack skills.	Shows and describes tests to faculty group. Prepares bulletin on tests.	Study test manuals. Observe demonstration. Conference with demonstration teacher.
Administers a second test of word attack skills when first test results are questionable and whenever further assessment of progress is needed.	Administers second test to three pupils; explains reasons and results.	

Competencies	Criterion Behaviors	Learning Experiences
Specialization Level		
Checks accepted sight word lists against current reading material and research to determine present relevance.	Compares one accepted list with developmental series. Cites reading vocabulary research from three major sources.	Study research references on vocabulary. Lecture experience.
Makes choices of word analysis tests according to suitability for different measurement purposes.	Prepares bulletin on word analysis tests.	Examine tests and references. Group discussion.
Administers complex individual oral diagnostic tests of word attack skills.	Administers Gates Diagnostic Reading Test or equivalent to 5 pupils.	Study test manuals. Lecture experience.
Devises special word attack tests to fit children having unique learning problems because of unusual backgrounds.	Devises two test of skills for children from the inner-city or another unique background.	Study references on sociologican and cultural background features. Group discussion.

Competencies	Criterion Behaviors	Learning Experiences
8. Diagnoses specific deficiencies in reading comprehension.		
Entry Level		
Proves familiarity with tests that measure comprehension of sentences or paragraphs.	Names two tests at appropriate level having these features.	Examine published tests.
Administers above tests when appropriate.	Administer to 5 pupils.	Study manuals. Observe demonstration.
Observes whether individuals who score low in general comprehension seem to have greater difficulty with details, general ideas, directions, or interpretive reading.	Devise question for three children reading different material to determine types of comprehension problems.	Study sample questions and deduce types of comprehension being elicited by each.
Advanced Level		
Proves familiarity with standard tests that measure comprehension of details, general significance, directions, and interpretive reading.	Names Gates Basic Reading Tests and others for each type of comprehension measurement.	Study tests and manuals. Lecture experience. Evaluate various tests.
Administers above tests to pinpoint comprehension difficulties of pupils who score low in general comprehension.	Administer instruments to 5 pupils having comprehension problems.	Observe demonstration. Simulate administration.
Specialization Level		
Devises and administers tests of literal and interpretive reading in each of the content fields.	Prepares tests in two fields. Helps other teachers prepare tests.	Study references. Study test examples.
Analyzes available tests for adequacy in relation to research on the nature of comprehension.	Itemizes comprehension components in tests and judges them by research findings.	Study research and references on comprehension. Group discussion.